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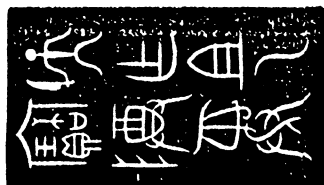
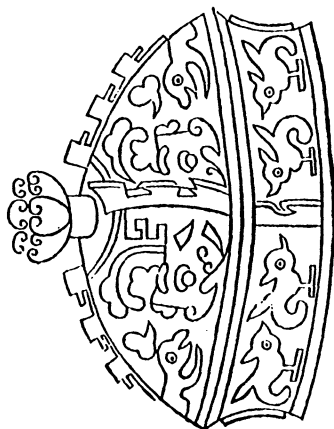
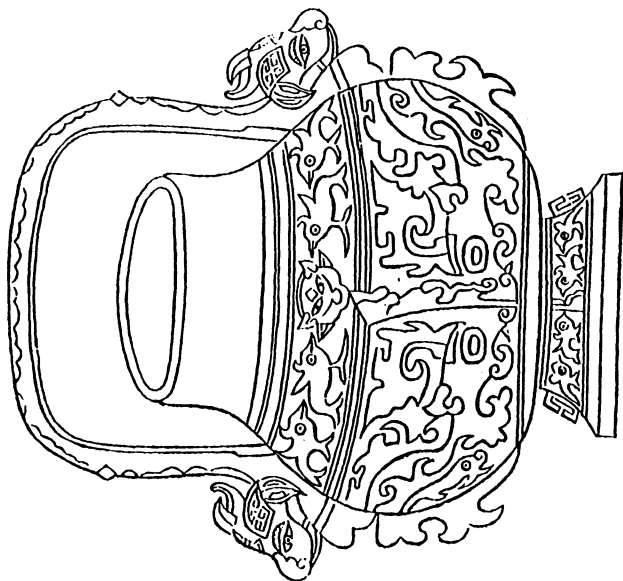
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ART. XV.—*Description of Ancient Chinese Vases ; with Inscriptions illustrative of the History of the Shang Dynasty of Chinese Sovereigns, who reigned from about 1756 to 1112 B.C. Translated from the Original Work, entitled Pö-hoo-too, by PETER PERRING THOMS, Esq.*

(Concluded from page 171).

THE
 YEW VESSELS, FOR CONTAINING WINE, CONSIDERED INFERIOR TO THE
 TSUN AND E VESSELS.

I.



THE vessel on the opposite page, including the cover, measured in height, twelve Chinese inches and four-tenths; its containing depth, seven inches and five-tenths; the length of the neck, four inches and eight-tenths; that of the body, eight inches and six-tenths; and the circumference, seven inches and two-tenths. It weighed nine Chinese pounds and twelve ounces. The inscription, which was engraved on the

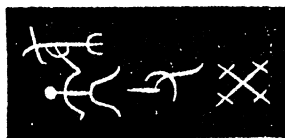
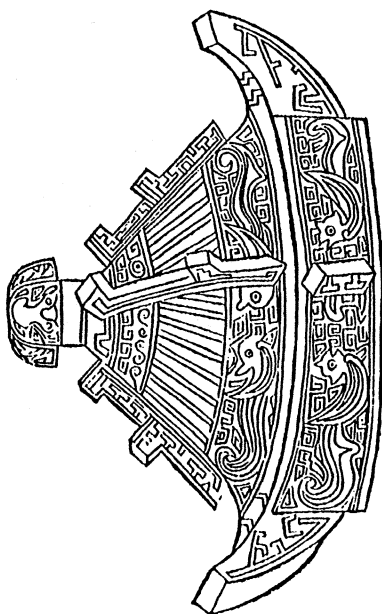
cover, and on the vessel, is, by the moderns written 孫作祖乙

寶尊彝 *Sun, tsö tsoo yih paou tsun e*, "The descendants make this beautiful or valuable vessel in veneration of their ancestor Tsoo-yin." From the form of the first ancient character, a hand grasping a missile weapon, this vessel has been denominated the *Che-tou*, or grasping a missile vase. The emperor Tsoo-yin reigned 1496 B.C., and was the son of HO-TAN-KEÄ; who, owing to great inundations, removed his court to Ho-chung-foo, in Honan province. The compiler here remarks, that the ancient forms of *Sun* almost invariably represent it as grasping a weapon; and that its meaning should then be restricted to that of a son, not grandson. It is also stated, that their ancient emperors, to encourage agriculture, set their subjects an example by annually taking hold of the plough.

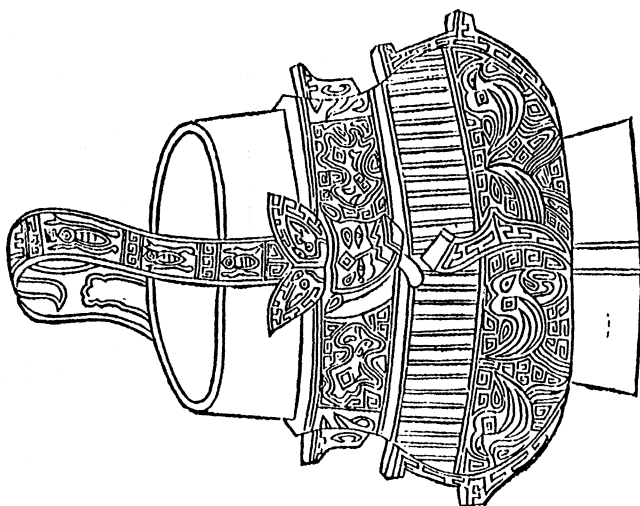
When sacrificing, the monarch was required to take hold of the 采 *He* vessel; when preparing for the sacred feast, to take hold of the 饗

刀 *Lwan-knife*; and, after feasting, when the sacred dance commenced, to raise the 干戚 *Kan-tsüh* banner, for it was considered indispensable that all the rites of sacrifice should be performed with dignity and promptitude; hence, all who assisted at the sacrifice had with them a knife. This is assigned as a reason why the first character is holding up a knife, or other weapon. It is said in the ancient work *Le-ke*, that the "usages require that the arm, while dividing the sacrifice, should be bared." From the relief and form of the characters, there can be no doubt, say the compilers, but that the vessel is very ancient, and was the first of this kind of vessels.

II.



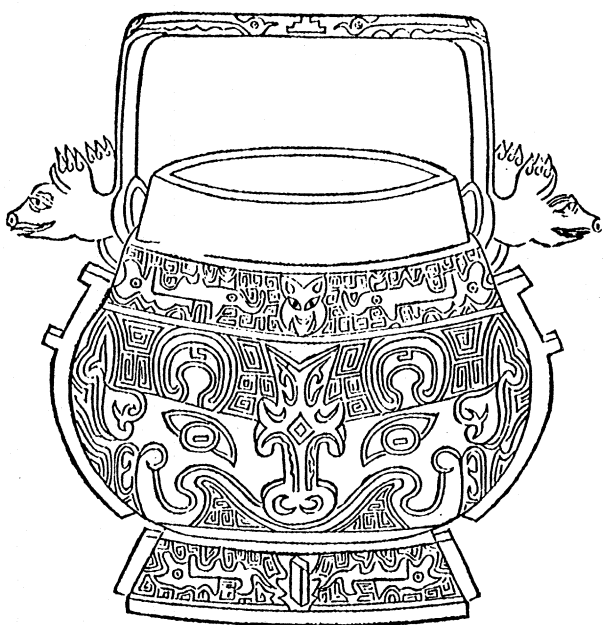
孫父癸



This vessel, including the cover, measured in height, eleven Chinese inches and six-tenths; its containing depth was seven inches and five-tenths; its circumference, at the neck, four inches and four-

tenths, and, at the centre, seven inches and three-tenths. It held about three English quarts, and weighed fifteen Chinese pounds and six ounces. In the relief, it is said, may be traced the form of the fabulous birds Hwang and Fung, which are frequently spoken of in this and the preceding dynasty. Their appearance indicated great national prosperity; and the vessel is supposed to have been used on occasions of national rejoicings, particularly as this device was frequently employed for similar purposes during the *Chow* dynasty.

III.



作孫
彝祖
寶尊辛

This vessel, exclusive of its cover, measured nine Chinese inches and three-tenths in height; and seven inches and five-tenths, in containing depth. The circumference, at the neck, was four inches and five-tenths, and at the centre, seven inches and one-tenth: from the neck downwards, it was eight inches. It was capable of containing about three English quarts, but weighed only thirteen Chinese ounces. The first character of the inscription is 孫 *Sun*, grasping a staff with

the right hand, and a kind of pronged halbert with the left. The import of the other characters is, "Tsoo-tsün made, or caused to be made, this sacred vessel." The fourteenth emperor of the *Chow* dynasty was called 祖辛 Tsoo-tsün (about 1480 B.C.), and his brother 沃甲 Yŭh-keä. They were sons of the Emperor 祖乙 Tsoo-yŭh, and the latter was father to 祖丁 Tsoo-ting. From the form of the first character, it is presumed that the vessel was used at military feasts.

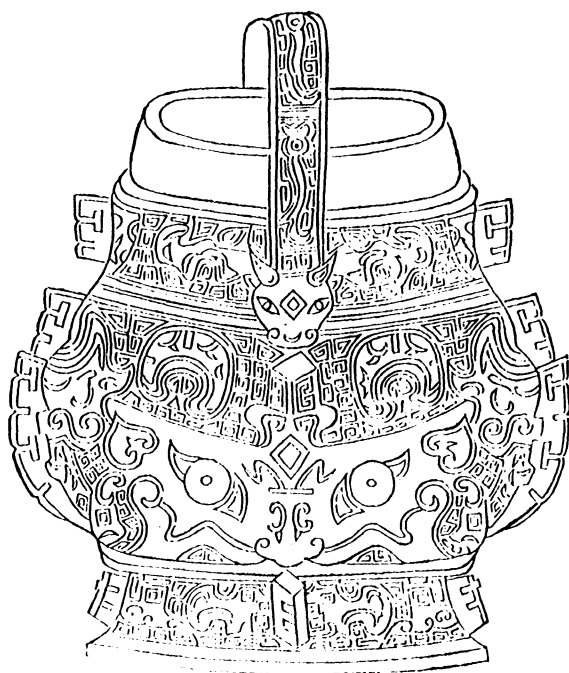
The Emperor SHUN, on being called to rule over the empire (2160 B.C.), caused an ensign of royalty to be placed at the entrance of his palace, attended by a band of musicians; which usage was continued by his descendants. Flags were also anciently considered necessary at dances, and especially on all public rejoicings. They were borne in the hand in religious processions, and when worshipping at different altars; hence it has been thought more than probable, that the staff in the right hand of the first character of the inscription should be understood as being a flag-staff.

On Tsoo-yŭh, SHUN's successor, ascending the throne, commotion generally prevailed; but it was happily subdued before the close of his reign. It is therefore conjectured that this vessel was made in commemoration of his mild government.

IV.

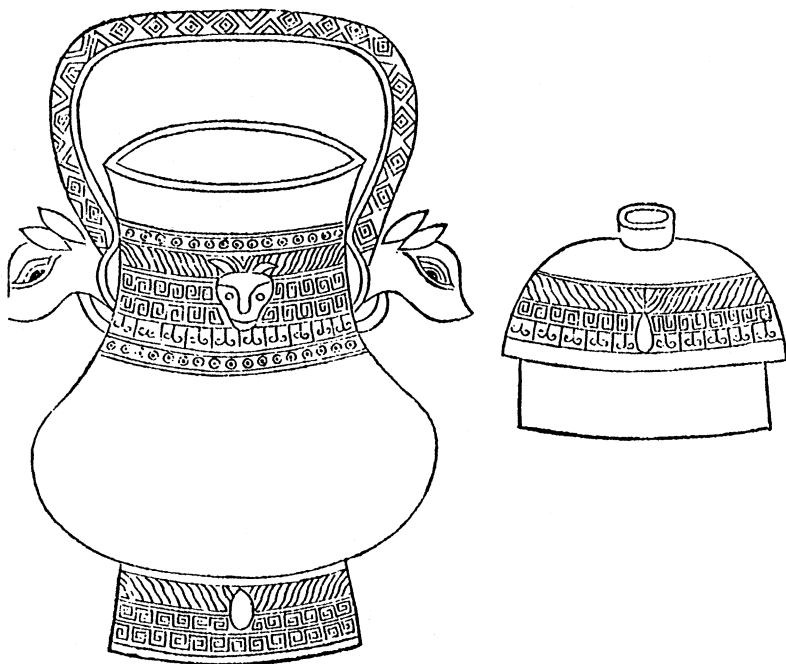


兕



This vessel, with its cover on the opposite page, measured in height, thirteen Chinese inches; its containing depth was six inches and four-tenths; its circumference at the neck three inches, and round the centre seven inches; it weighed ten Chinese pounds and seven ounces; it had two ears and an arched handle. The vessel and cover had each the hieroglyphic representation of a *rhinoceros*. There is a passage in the *Lun-yu*, which says, "That a tiger and a rhinoceros, on escaping from confinement, are known not to be docile animals, but destroyers of mankind." The ancients, at an early period, used a cup made of the horn of a rhinoceros to drink out of, as a forfeit or punishment. The *She-king*, in denouncing the crimes of one of the ancient ministers, says, "Give him (the transgressor) a rhinoceros' cup!" It is presumed, from the vessel having the above inscription, that it was intended to be admonitory, which seems confirmed by its having the *Haou-t'ien* device both on the handle and body of the vessel, which has already been explained. On the cover two heads of an animal may be traced, and one also on the handle, which are said to be heads of rhinoceroses.

V.



丁子王錫爵丙甲
 貝左塞用作兄癸
 彝十九夕惟
 王九祀世昌高



This vessel, including the cover, measured in height, seven Chinese inches and three-tenths; its containing depth was five inches and three-tenths; its circumference at the neck, two inches and one-tenth and round the centre four inches; it weighed two Chinese pounds and,

twelve ounces, and had two ears and a handle. The last character of the inscription is not understood, though supposed to mean *Kaou*, "high, lofty." The inscription reads thus:—"The king, TING-TSZE, on Ping-keü day, gave this valuable vessel to be used when worshipping his brother's manes, on the nineteenth evening of the month, being the ninth year of his reign. May he experience ages of felicity!"

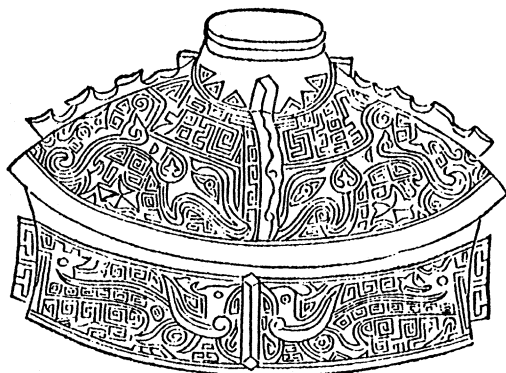
It is not known to whom this inscription alludes. The sovereigns of the *Hea* and *Chow* dynasties were styled Wang, or *kings*; while those of the dynasty of which we are treating did not make use of any title, but blending some assumed name with the name of the day on which they ascended the throne, it became their designation. *Sze*, "a year," the last character but three, affords good data to calculate on as to the period when the vessel was made, for, during the time of the ancient worthies YAOU and SHUN, the year was expressed by 載

Tsae; during the *Hea* dynasty by 歲 *Suy*; and the *Shang* dynasty

by 祀 *Sze*; hence, from their mode of writing the word *year*,

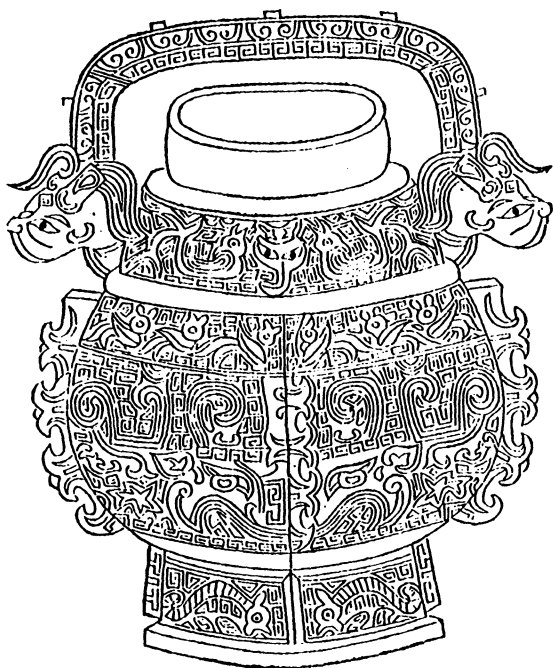
little doubt can be entertained but that this vessel belonged to the *Shang* dynasty, for the *Chow* sovereigns (the following dynasty) adopted 年 *Nëen* for the year, which has been continued to the present day.

VI.



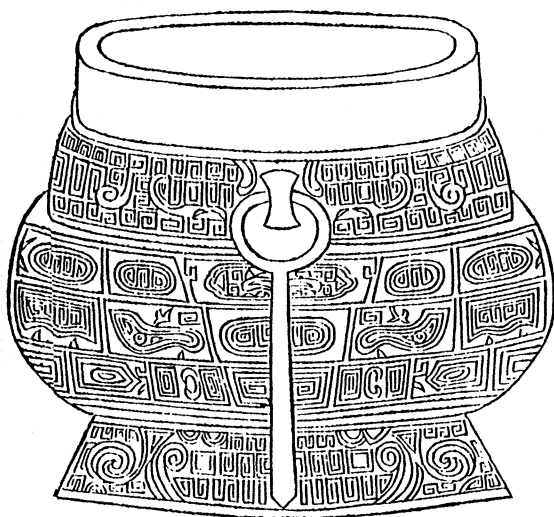
三
矢
貝
父
辛





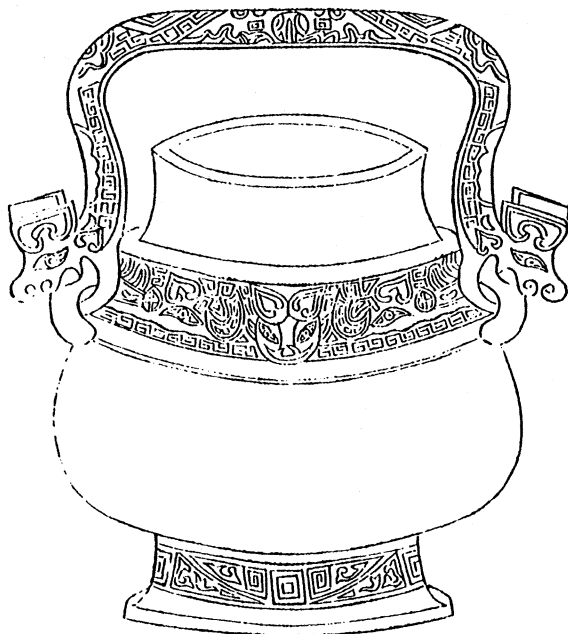
This vessel, including its cover on the preceding page, measured in height, ten Chinese inches ; its containing depth seven inches and five-tenths ; the circumference of its neck three inches and five-tenths ; its breadth two inches and six-tenths ; the length of the body six inches and seven-tenths ; its circumference five inches and four-tenths. It contained two quarts, and weighed seven Chinese pounds and five ounces ; it had two ears and a handle, with the above inscription on the vessel and cover. The first character is formed of three arrows stuck in a kind of stand, the other three are *Pei foo sin*. The *Shoo-king* records the sovereign of *Ping* making Duke Wǎn, of the state *Tsin*, a present of a vessel for containing fragrant wine, a bow, and one hundred arrows, made of the *Tung* wood ; also a bow made of the *Lew* wood, with one hundred arrows, which kind of arrows were highly esteemed in those days. The first character, therefore, is thought to be hieroglyphical of the three presents. The vessel is stated to have been preserved by the family in remembrance of the munificence of the prince who bestowed it.

VII.



This vessel measured in height, eight Chinese inches; its containing depth was four inches and nine-tenths; its circumference, at the neck, four inches and three-tenths; and round the centre, seven inches. It weighed five Chinese pounds and nine ounces. At each side was attached a drop, which answered the purpose of a handle, having the ancient character  *T'ien*, "field, or land," on it. The device is considered ingenious and chaste, and is much admired by the moderns. It is supposed that this vessel, the only one of the pattern which appears to have been preserved, was set apart for presenting thank-offerings for an abundant crop.

VIII.



孫
父
癸

This vessel measured in height seven Chinese inches and eight-tenths; its containing depth six inches and seven-tenths; its circumference at the mouth four inches and five-tenths; round the centre seven inches and six-tenths. It weighed eight Chinese pounds and four ounces, having the above inscription. The first character represents a person brandishing a lance or spear in each hand. Spears were anciently, and are now, carried in religious processions, and form a part of the furniture of the temple. In antiquity, both civil and military officers of government, as well as the people, were required to be expert in the use of the spear; as from among those who excelled in this exercise, it is said, kings were chosen, and by it they possessed themselves of the empire. It is recorded, that in honour of the spear, a piece of sacred music was composed for the use of the temple, and that this vessel, which is supposed to have contained sweet wine, was used on such occasions. The same authority remarks, that *Kwei*, the last character of the inscription, signifies 報 *Paou*, "to recompense;" and that as CHING-T'ANG, the founder of this dynasty, acquired the empire by the spear, his son had this vessel made in honour of him.

During the ancient reigns of WHANG-TE, YAOU, and SHUN, there were the two pieces of national music called *Wăn* and *Woo*, which, when played, were accompanied by a certain display of the spear, similar to what the first character of the inscription indicates. To this account of ancient music are added the names of several other pieces that were composed in honour of the Emperors WHANG-TE, YAOU, and SHUN, &c. of which little more is now known than their names.

While the preceding paper introduces the reader to an acquaintance with the ancient rites, sacrifices, and usages of the Chinese, during the early period of their history, it cannot have escaped his notice, that the embellishments of the vessels, if not elegant, are always chaste, and the inscriptions frequently significant. It shews, also, that worship and sacrifice were not only offered to the Heavens and to the Earth, the two great powers from which, they say, all things proceed, but also to the gods of the soil, of grain, &c. The founder of the *Shang* dynasty is, however, represented as appealing to SHANG-T'ËN, the Supreme Ruler, for the justice of his motives, and as acting for Him in exterminating the wicked K'Ë-WANG and his adherents. Previous to the *Shang* dynasty, worship was offered to the gods of the woods and rivers, and to the spirits of the departed, by their immediate descendants, as well as to evil spirits, a custom which exists to the present day. During the *Chow* dynasty offerings were more general; for there are many vessels designed for purposes different from those which we have described. Regretting, as we must, the ignorance of the Chinese as to the true God, it is yet pleasing to see, in the midst of great darkness, the happy effects of the correct principle of *filial duty*, or reverence for parents, respect for the elders of the same family, and for those who hold important situations. This principle, or doctrine, seems to have been held by FÛN-HE, and his immediate descendants, but was made by CONFUCIUS, *to be*, as they say, *a blessing to ten thousand ages*. We, therefore, need not wonder that so many vessels should have had the character *Tsze*, a "son," and *Sun*, a "grandson," engraved on them.